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CASE REPORT

Quality Management of Higher Education as a Roadmap for Sustainable Development, Egypt as a Case Study

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Abstract

At the home of one of the oldest civilization on the planet, Egypt concern much about higher education (HE) and its consequences on sustainable development comes as no surprise. In Egypt like other developing countries in the world, universities and other higher education institutions view their role as increasingly central to national economies, being the source of educated and trained personnel for national sustainable development. Higher Education is also a significant industry in its own right. Developed and developing nations alike have been examining most successful ways to heed calls for improved and relevant provision of higher education – of course, the calls faced by some challenges include changes imposed by the forces of globalization and internationalization, rapid technological innovation, access and equity concerns and the changing nature of the marketplace of higher education.

Today, higher education is being redesigned in terms of how to prepare people for life: for job security; for the demands of a rapidly changing society; and for technological changes. Numerous aspects of higher education for sustainable development (HESD) are already taught but there is a general lack of Coherence and innovation. Sustainable development includes meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

So, in higher education, greater emphasis is being placed on innovation, improving the quality of teaching and learning, the measurement of performance and learning outcomes, access and regional competitiveness. Quality Management programme in Higher Education (QMHE) brings together higher education institutions and governments to share best practices, ideas and potential models to meet these challenges through networks, studies and research.

. The present communication discusses three major roles of high quality of higher education institutions in Egypt in terms of achieving sustainable development, these are: Promotion of research, qualified and well trained teacher and creating a qualified leadership for the nation.

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Sustainability promotes meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Its success is measured by the triple bottom line: environmental responsibility, economic prosperity, and social equity

History

Higher education in Egypt dates back to 988 AD from the creation of Al-Azhar University by the Fatimids. It is considered to be the world's oldest university still operating. Al-Azhar University conferred academic degrees, and had individual faculties for Islamic Theology, Islamic Law and Jurisprudence, Arabic Grammar, Islamic Astronomy, Early Islamic Philosophy. The growth of an educated class of Egyptians inspired a group of Egyptian leaders and distinguished persons to donate and found the first National Egyptian University in 1908 in Egypt, later known as Cairo University. As a private institution it had a liberal arts focus, offering courses in economics, philosophy, history and literature, mainly taught by European teachers of Oriental Studies. This university was supported by the *Khedive Abass* (the Egyptian King) who nominated his son, Fouad I, as the first university president. Later, in 1940, the university was renamed Fouad I University.

Another phase of higher education started in 1919, when a group of Americans who were interested in spreading American culture in the Middle East founded the American University in Cairo as an English-language university.

As belief in the importance of higher education grew, the government established two other universities in Alexandria in 1942 and in Cairo (Ain Shams) in 1950. This was also a response to meeting the increase of secondary education graduates.

These movements continued on a wider scale after the 1952 revolution, when the education system became a fully social system. This was clearly enshrined in a constitutional amendment, which stated that education should be a right for all Egyptians. The socialist framework was clearly reflected in the education system because of its centralization. There was a significant growth in enrolment. This concept was even extended to other Arab, Muslim and African countries where Egypt, despite its economic constraints, offered scholarships to thousands of students in these countries. In return this allowed Egypt to play a crucial role in the development of these countries.

The growth of higher education in Egypt began in 1957. Until then, there had been five public universities in Egypt. By the beginning of the 1960s, the government had adopted a policy of higher education expansion and started opening university branches across the country, which were transformed into independent universities afterwards. For example: Al-Minya University was the former branch of Assiut University. This policy of creating branches in various geographical areas which would eventually become independent universities is still in practice today. It merges different faculties and technical colleges (mainly technical studies of 4 years leading to a degree or a B.Sc.) in a single university⁽¹⁾.

Figures & Facts about Higher Education in Egypt:

- 2.4 million Students (undergraduate)
- About 250 thousand Students (Post Graduate)
- 63000 Staff members
- 18 Public Universities
- 15 Private Universities
- Technical colleges (12)
- Private Institutes (115)

Introduction

In Egypt, education has been placed near the top of the government's agenda as a driving force for economic growth and global competitiveness. As with many developing nations, Egypt faces a monumental challenge in delivering quality education to its citizens.

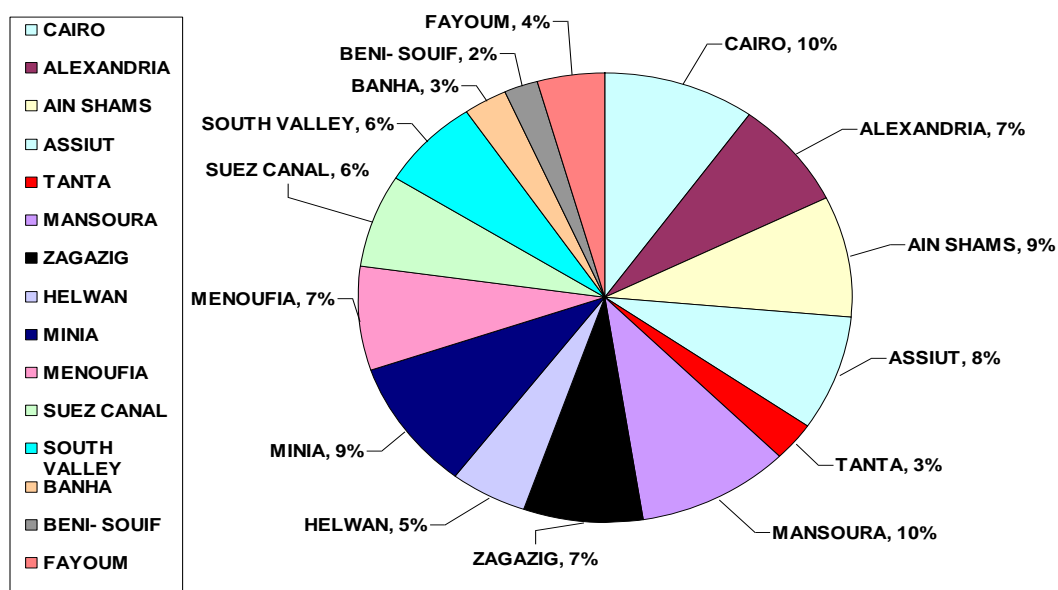
The key constraints are the absence of a collaborative and coordinated approach to education among the private and public sectors as well as limited resources. A new willingness on the part of political leaders, educators, policy makers and the public to consider innovative approaches has resulted in a new wave of reforms that is expected to dramatically impact Egypt's economic growth and prosperity.

The Ministry of Higher education, being responsible for the overall education system in Egypt as stipulated in the constitution, took the initiative to develop an overall strategic plan for quality assurance and accreditation to assist Egyptian Higher Education Institutions to improve the quality of their academic programs and that of their graduates. An institutional system timetable for performance evaluation and quality control within higher education institutions have been done for creating common culture for quality & trust in Egyptian higher education outcomes, establishing a center for performance evaluation and quality assurance in all higher education institutions (2004-2007), working on a set of academic reference standards for a number of 450 academic programs (2004-2007), all state or private higher education institutions are to carry out a periodical self assessment study (2004-2009), finally

developmental engagements for maximizing points of strength and improving points of weaknesses based on the self assessment report's recommendations and feedback.

The Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt has been working over the past two decades on improving higher education through developing and implementing a comprehensive strategic plan for reform in a phased manner. The first phase started in 1989 with the implementation of the Engineering and Technical Education Project (ETEP), which ran until 1998. The second phase reformed higher education as a whole. The third phase, which ran from 2002 until 2009 was called the Higher Education Enhancement Project (HEEP). It aimed to improve efficiency through the reform of governance and management, the quality and relevance of university and mid-level technical education. HEEP consisted of six major projects including ICTP (Information and Communication Technology Project), which funded a number of projects at the supreme council of universities and the universities themselves. These projects included improving the IT infrastructure in universities to support teaching, research and management through monitoring their traffic and explore the behavior of various applications to determine the actual usage of available bandwidth, and then optimize its utilization.

Ratios of Universities Projects's from Total QAAP Projects



Source: Improving the Quality of Higher Education in Egypt, Prof. Nadia Badrawi

Currently implemented projects within the scope of HE strategic plan (phase I: 2003-2007) ⁽³⁾

Project	Available fund
Quality Assurance & Accreditation Project (QAAP).	6 (million dollar)
Faculty & Leadership Development Project (FLDP).	6 (million dollar)
Higher Education Enhancement Project Fund (HEEPF)	12 (million dollar)
Information and Communication Technology Project (ICTP).	10.5 (million dollar)
Technical colleges Project (TCP)	17 (million dollar)
Faculties of Education Project (FOEP).	14 (million dollar)
Trans-European Mobility Programme for University studies (Tempus – Media III)	33(million €)

The last phase included three projects: QAAP / QAAP 2 / CIQAP, aimed to form a Quality Assurance Systems, establishment of internal Quality assurance System in 250 Faculty out of 320, preparation of Faculties for the Quality Improvement and Qualification for Accreditation (CIQAP). In 50 Faculties and Allocated Budget for the Preparation for Accreditation: One Billion EGP (2007- 2012)

To ensure quality, continuous development and efficient performance of Egyptian higher education institutions, of their systems and of their programmes, in accordance with their mission statements and declared goals; and to gain the confidence of the community in their graduates, depending on distinguished and competent human resources,

and based on internationally recognized evaluation mechanisms through an independent, neutral and transparent framework. However, in order to drive our education more toward the sustainable development, we have to implement the quality education that is oriented at the value and skills of sustainability into the various kinds and levels of education.

Challenges and Future Aspiration:

1. Access and Equity: 30% of the age group are currently enrolled with an objective to reach 40% by 2022 (almost doubling the current number of Students)
2. Staff members & staff/ student ratio: 63000 to be doubled by the year 2022, and Ratio of Staff to Student to reach International Standards (1:20 and 1:40)
3. Up-to-date Infrastructure: Competitive projects and mechanisms, Direct Funds from the Government Community funds
4. Quality Assurance and Accreditation for more than 400 Faculties and institutes in the state universities
5. Cost, finance and funding mechanisms
6. More Relevance and flexibility in the H.E system

The role and responsibility of higher education can never be overemphasized or overestimated. Consequently we can observe the crucial role of higher education for sustainable development in three major areas:

1) Higher education, especially universities are responsible for **researches** and findings of the ways of sustainable development and the necessary knowledge and skills and also norms of behavior. Scientific and technological improvement for sustainable production and consumption should be carried on by researches of universities.

The crucial role of higher education as the highly advanced and comprehensive knowledge provider is to find out the best way to bring about harmony and synthesis among the three pillars of sustainable development; economic, environmental, and social tasks and issues, which are often in conflict with each other.

Institutions of higher education are not just simple provider of advanced knowledge and technology, but should be deliberating, and searching for the holistic view and concept of sustainable development and the necessary strategy and action plan.

Development of graduate studies & scientific research in higher education institutions are mainly achieved via enhancing and developing academic & research community performance inside and outside universities, preparation of academic society human resources in HE & research institutions, directing graduate studies and research topics to market research needs and development plans, fostering lifelong-learning skills and attitudes supporting scientific and research productivity knowledge base of academic society.

2) Higher education incorporates institutions that train and produce **teachers** for primary and secondary education, and also for the vocational, technical schools. Quality education completely depends on the degree of qualified teachers and education for sustainable development can be practiced only through the teachers that have been trained and conscientized of the value and perspective of sustainability. Education for Sustainable Development should provide learners with skills, perspectives, values and knowledge to live sustainably in their communities.

ESD is not a simple subject that can be learned through only knowledge transfer or text books, but through a course of interdisciplinary approaches to help the learners be familiarized with the complex problems of society and convinced of the necessary actions and involvement. Teachers of ESD must be trained to carry out this kind of teaching job. And Universities are responsible for training these kinds of teaching personals.

There is no question that well-trained teachers are essential for student learning. High quality instruction demands that teachers are aware of and are able to respond to their students' unique qualities and characteristics. The majority of students spend a high percentage of their time in the regular education classroom. Therefore, it is essential that teachers and other school personnel are familiar with the characteristics of giftedness and possess an array of strategies to address and meet the students' learning differences and needs. Only a small number of universities offer programs that prepare teachers specifically for working with gifted and talented learners, only a handful of states require all teachers to receive pre-service training in gifted and talented education. As a result, responsibility for improving teaching and learning of gifted students rests with school district personnel who hire teachers and ensure their competence through required licensure or certification, professional development, collaboration with colleagues, and assessment of teacher practice. Teachers knowledgeable about the learning needs of gifted and talented students are making a difference for students across the country

3) Higher education also produces **leaders and elites** of the country and society, who are directing and managing political parties, governmental bureaucracies, economic institutes and private industries, all the stakeholders of

sustainable development. If higher education fails to educate the students for sustainability, the future leaders of various sectors and areas cannot be qualified agents for sustainable development. Sustainable development cannot be achieved or realized by some successful efforts of individuals or some groups in a sector. Stakeholders of sustainable development are from the broad areas of a country and society; scientists, businessmen, politicians, local governments, engineers, agricultural producers, journalists, students, and teachers etc. Faculty, leadership & administrators professional development. Faculty and leadership development to support academic & institutional efficiency & effectiveness. Reinforcing the importance of self professional development for required competencies & skills. Training academic leaderships for modern management systems for HE institutions. Studying possible alternatives & options for improving faculty members compensations

Roadmap to excellence

To keep pace with time, higher education institutions in Egypt should decide and specify their own aims and objectives. The quality of higher education may then be assessed, by subject, against the specifications and aims and objectives of the subject provider. This fitness-for-purpose would measure the extent to which the subject provider (university and college) is achieving its aims and objectives it has set for itself. However, it must be pointed out that aims and objectives should concern the development of intellectual enterprise among students. It should ensure that individuals seeking a higher education qualification are able to develop relevant competencies and aptitudes, at least in part, through project-based work designed to be undertaken in a real setting. The assessment should involve experts from the host for the project and the student's own institution.

Finally, we believe that Quality Assurance is not a project or a process; it is a Culture and should be the Ensemble of Elements of Higher Education.

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